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JOINT UN/UNESCO SEMINAR ON URBANIZATION IN THE ECAFE REGION

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SOCIAL, EDUCATIONAL and LABOUR POLICIES

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The subject was introduced by the Rapporteur with some brief remarks. He confined the discussion mainly to educational policies as the matters relating to social and labour policies had already been discussed previously. He said that the Seminar was designed to clarify the problems arising from rapid urbanization in the ECAFE region and was expected to pin-point the problems facing policy makers in the respective fields.

A quick look was taken at the existing situation in the rapidly growing urban areas. He held that apart from the natural growth of population by increasing birth rate, and decreasing death rate, there had been heavy influx of people to urban areas due to various reasons such as, want of employment in the villages, possibility of employment in the cities, political insecurity due to war and internal disturbances and movement of population due to political partition. The educational facilities which were inadequate even before this influx could not at all cope with the increased demand created by the new situation.

/The authorities

The authorities had a hard time in providing food, clothing and shelter to the incoming migrants, which naturally claimed the highest priority. So, though the need for education was recognized, it had to wait till the other crying problems were tackled. Educational facilities could not therefore be extended as quickly as the population increased. The result was overcrowding in schools and colleges. Many of them had to work in double shifts for different sets of pupils and some had to run evening and night classes as well. This is still true for many areas, though a large number of schools have already been built. Taking advantage of the shortage, some shrewd and unscruplous persons started a few educational institutions with profit motive, charging very high fees and providing very inferior type of facilities in the shape of accommodation, equipment and staff.

It was pointed out that people had great faith in the power of education in influencing human behaviour and it could be used to bring about desirable forms of behaviour or response to given circumstances. But the existing educational facilities in the urban areas in ECAFE region were inadequate. So in planning future extension of existing cities and establishment of new towns. It was essential to locate educational institutions of different types at convenient centres of residential areas so that the children of that area could attend schools without having to travel a long way amidst the hazards of city traffic. There should be one elementary school for each two to four thousand of the population and a secondary school for say, eight to sixteen thousand population. Vocational schools technical schools, polytechnics, and evening classes of different kinds should also be located at convenient centres. Provision should also be made for counselling and guidance and dissemination of information about employment opportunities and the qualifications required for them.

While planning for educational facilities for the children, the adults were not to be forgotten. It was well known that a large proportion of the adult population of ECAFE region migrating to urban areas was illiterate, which stood in the way of their adjustment to urban life and to their employment

/in better

in better paid jobs. Arrangement should be made to educate the adult illiterates and to orientate them to the urban life. Apart from formal literacy they needed training in safety against the hazards of urban traffic, and of machines in factories. They had also to be accustomed to work at fixed hours. They were to be cautioned against absenteeism and laziness which would impair their efficiency.

The factory labourers were not to be considered merely as so many operatives in the production lines. They were to be treated with sympathy and understanding as human beings, having psychological and emotional needs, to be satisfied labour welfare officers of the right type could do a lot in making the workers happier and better adjusted to the changed environment.

It was also essential to utilize the informal agencies for education, such as the church, the temple, the mosque, the club, the library, the community centre, the museum, the press, the radio, the cinema, the television etc.

Education for complete living included education for work as well as leisure. Education for work was simple to understand. Its aim was to develop economic competency to enable the individual to earn a living. But education for leisure might seem to be a little more difficult. Its aim was create in the individual a taste for healthy pursuits to utilize his leisure time so that he may be able to share in the cultural enjoyment of literature, poetry, drama, music, films, sports and the like, and to make an active effort in creating recreation for himself.

He added that human beings were valuable materials potentially capable of making important contributions to the happiness and well-being of the total human race. It was our own responsibility to develop their potentiality by giving proper education and opportunities to be useful citizens of the world. Education must help the individual to adapt himself to his new situation and give him the necessary orientation for the changes confronted in an urban area. Such adjustment would prevent him from becoming a delinquent, a neuretic or a deviate.

/Generally speaking,

Generally speaking, industrialists in the ECAFE region did not recognize the importance of such social investments as building of schools, clubs, libraries and hospitals for their workers. In this respect governments would have to compel industrialists to re-invest a part of their profits in such projects.

Along with the education of the urban population we had to remember that the need for education in the villages was more urgent, as illiteracy and ignorance was more acute in rural areas. We could utilize the educational projects in the villages in arresting the drift to urban areas without proper preparation for gainful employment. The condition of living in rural areas could be improved through UNESCO's Fundamental Education programmes, through Village AID and community projects, which tried to help the villagers to help themselves. In addition to imparting literacy to the villager, these projects aimed at improving the condition of living in the villages, and creating opportunities for employment or self-employment by encouraging small industries for utilizing local raw materials. Agricultural income could also be increased through V. AID projects, by adopting simple improved methods, introducing vegetable farming, horticulture, fruit culture and better utilization of land through crop rotation. These measures might decelerate, if not arrest, large-scale migration to urban areas, and mitigate the evils of over-rapid urbanization such as overcrowding, dirt, disease, destitution and moral degradation. It had to be remembered that the most profitable investment a backward country could make was to spend on education.

The importance of adapting UNESCO's Fundamental education programmes for introduction in urban areas was also stressed by the speaker.

An interesting and lively discussion followed. Some of the points made in the discussion are mentioned below:

i. The International Conference of Social Work, in its recent meeting had discussed the ways and means for combating the evils of over-rapid urbanization.

ii. Labourers liked to take advantage of adult education programmes if they could afford the cost.

/iii. Industrialists

iii. Industrialists in Ahmedabad in India, provided several amenities such as libraries for their workers and scholarships for their children.

iv. In service training in industry was helpful in improving efficiency and productivity and reducing accidents in factories.

v. In addition to academic subjects, it was necessary to give a technical and practical grounding to the students.

vi. Accelerated technical training could be given in factories which could be decentralized to avoid the evil effects of rapid urbanization.

vii. Community projects for development and self-help could be extended to urban areas with great advantage.

viii. The educational system of each country should cater to its own needs but should not concentrate on technical education to the exclusion of humanities and general cultural subjects.

ix. Science students should know something of humanities and the students of humanities should acquire some general knowledge of science to broaden their outlook.

x. Effective provision should be made for the education of the physically and mentally defective children with a view to making them useful citizens.

The Seminar arrived at the following conclusions regarding educational policies.